



***PUBLIC SAFETY & SECURITY
COMMITTEE***
February 16, 2017

My name is Mayor Neil O’Leary from the City of Waterbury. I am here to testify on behalf of my city and the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM).

I appreciate the opportunity to testify in *opposition* to **SB 763** “An Act Concerning Workers’ Compensation Coverage for Police Officers, Firefighters and Emergency Medical Technicians with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder”

SB 763 would, among other things, mandate full wage replacement workers’ compensation benefits for all state and local police, career and volunteer firefighters, and emergency medical technicians that have been diagnosed with a mental or emotional impairment as the result of visually witnessing the death or the immediate aftermath of death of another human being.

CCM acknowledges the important role public safety personnel have in our communities. We are grateful for the commitment they have made to protect and serve all of Connecticut’s residents. However, CCM has serious concerns with the potentially large and unpredictable costs that may result from this proposal.

Towns and cities cannot afford to pay these benefits without the help of the State.

Depending on the circumstances, the cost of an individual “mental-mental” case for either partial disability or a permanent total claim could range from tens of thousands of dollars, to over **\$1 million** for the duration of the claim.¹ Additionally, once an injury is identified as a work related injury and covered under the workers' compensation system any subsequent injury or impairment which can be causally linked to the initial injury is also covered by workers' compensation. This would result in a wide range of potential per claim costs.

SB 763 is **overly broad and would increase municipal exposure to potential fraud** In particular, the phrases “**visually witnessing**”, “**death**” and a diagnosis of “**mental or emotional impairment**” is highly subjective and subject to interpretation and could mean simply viewing photographs or videos of an incident or crime scene, or of the deceased or injured victim.

¹ OFA Fiscal Note, SB 593, 2015

Towns and cities already offer health insurance, disability leave and Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) to employees suffering from mental or emotional impairments. These existing benefits provide employees access to counseling, therapy and other essential services to assist them and their families during difficult periods. Municipalities have also provided benefits above and beyond contractual obligations in response to the most horrific circumstances.

The issue of determining how to assist state and local employees who are affected by certain, tragic events must be solved with a statewide solution.

CCM and the City of Waterbury urges the Committee to **take no action on SB 763.**

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If you have any questions, please contact Mike Muszynski of CCM, at mmuszynski@ccm-ct.org or (203) 500-7556.